

AGN. NO.

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR SHEILA KUEHL

August 9, 2016

In a number of states across the country, children depend on Medicaid to meet their physical and mental health needs. Current federal law prohibits Medicaid reimbursement for care that is provided to those who are incarcerated, even if the people in custody are minors. Evidence tends to show that a high percentage of youth who are involved with the juvenile justice system are Medicaid-eligible. Many of these justice-involved youth have a family history that includes trauma, abuse or neglect, unmet mental health and substance abuse needs, poverty, and a limited history with the health care system. Fortunately, here in California, unlike in most other states, Medicaid coverage for inmates is only suspended during the term of their incarceration, and not terminated. Other states, however, completely terminate eligibility. This benefit termination leads to critical gaps in physical, mental and behavioral health services as youth re-enter their communities. It can take longer for them to reapply for Medicaid, and for their applications to be approved, than the average 3.5 months of incarceration of juveniles. The gap of Medicaid coverage makes it more challenging to coordinate and maintain the care, which had been provided to these children in juvenile justice facilities, after they re-enter the community. Many are then denied access to their medication and

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to mental health and substance abuse treatment. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, as many as 70% of children in the juvenile justice system require mental health treatment but are often removed from Medicaid coverage automatically.

The At-Risk Youth Medicaid Protection Act would prohibit states from terminating an eligible child's Medicaid coverage, and instead require states to automatically restore a child's enrollment in a medical assistance plan upon his or her release. This bipartisan Act, introduced in the House of Representatives by Representatives Tony Cardenas and Morgan Griffith (H.R. 5100), and Senators Chris Murphy and Cory Booker (S.B. 2874), will ensure continuity of care for all Medicaid-eligible, justice-involved youth. As Senator Booker said, "Our nation must do more to support our most vulnerable youth, including ensuring a child does not encounter unnecessary obstacles to treatment, medication or mental health services just because of burdensome paperwork."

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the County's Washington, D.C. advocates to support the At-Risk Youth Medicaid Protection Act and send a 5-signature letter to the Los Angeles County Congressional delegation expressing the Board's support.

S:SG/At-Risk Youth Medicaid Protection Act